



The Eighth American Studies Network (ASN) Annual Conference



U.S. Soft Power and Social Equality

**Northeast Normal University, Changchun, China
September 23-25, 2011**

Call for Conference Papers

The United States and China share the most important bilateral relationship in the world today. In the second half of the 20th century, this relationship experienced long periods of ups and downs. Both countries witnessed hostile containment and military conflicts in the three decades after 1949. With the normalization of Sino-U.S. relations in 1979, the two countries have experienced another three decades of communication and cooperation in many international fields.

In 1990, Harvard professor Joseph S. Nye publicized his “soft power” theory, emphasizing the importance of cultural and public diplomacy. In his view, soft power “arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced.” Since then, soft power theory has received world-wide attention. While stressing the critical role of soft power in the success of international politics, Nye cherishes a strong hope in his mind of peaceful cooperation between the U.S. and other important countries, like China.

Social equality, on the other hand, is a domestic force that depends upon a wide range of factors, including access to education, economic opportunity, and a social safety net that protects basic needs such as housing, health care, and old-age security. As a leading social, cultural, and economic power and one of the world's major advocates of democracy, the U.S. implicitly presents itself as a model of the values for which it stands. In so doing, it often becomes subject to global scrutiny, and its ability to live up to its avowed goals of equality, liberty, and justice for all undergirds its efforts to use soft power to influence social and political developments in other countries. In the face of severe economic constraints, the U.S. is currently reconsidering many of the social programs that once served to “level the playing field” for all Americans.

If Nye's concept about the significance of soft power in the history of international politics has been correct, then the question arises, to what extent might soft power be used to replace hard power? How has U.S. government used soft power to achieve U.S.

interests? Are other countries striving for the same purpose in the same way? What is the relationship between social equality, especially racial and gender equality, and U.S. soft power? If social equality diminishes in the U.S., does it weaken its soft power? How has the U.S. government been working on developing its own soft power? What impact does U.S. soft power have on Sino-U.S. relations? What would U.S. scholars view as Chinese soft power? How does the Chinese academic community understand Nye's soft power theory?

All these and many other questions need further academic exploration. Thus we will devote the eighth annual American Studies Network Conference to the theme of *U.S. Soft Power and Social Equality*. This conference will be held on September 23-25, 2011 (the fourth weekend in September) in Changchun, Jilin Province, China. It will be co-sponsored by the US-China Education Trust (USCET) and the Institute of American Studies and Center for History of World Civilizations, Northeast Normal University. The organizers of the conference are happy to invite experts from home and abroad to submit papers for presentation in Changchun.

Details related to the conference are as follows:

I. Conference Themes

1. The Concept of "Soft power" and Related Studies in the U.S. and China
2. Expansion of U.S. Soft power and Its Global and Regional Impact
3. Impact of Soft Power on Sino-U.S. Relations in History and in the Future
4. U.S. Racial and Gender Equality in the Multi-Cultural Context
5. Role of Religion in U.S. Social Equality
6. American Studies in China: Retrospect and Prospect

Each conference theme will be explored in multiple panels. More specific panel topics will be defined based on papers accepted for presentation at the conference. There will also be open panels to encourage broader participation. Individuals who do not wish to give papers following the specific themes above may submit proposals that relate generally to the conference theme.

II. Time, Venue, and Registration Fee

Time:	September 23-25, 2011 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday)
Venue:	Northeast Normal University, Changchun, Jilin Province, China
Registration Fee:	800 RMB/person for ordinary participants, 400 RMB/person for graduate students

In addition to specially invited keynote speakers, USCET will subsidize the registration and accommodation expenses for one participant who is selected to deliver a paper from each ASN member institution. Other participants need to cover their own registration and accommodation costs. All participants are responsible for their transportation expenses to and from (and local transportation in) Changchun.

Scholars and graduate students who are interested in speaking at the conference are required to submit the title of their paper and an abstract of approximately 500 words by email by August 8, 2011, along with the attached reply form, to info@uscet.net. A letter of invitation will be sent by Northeast Normal University, if the paper is accepted.

Those whose papers are not accepted will not be able to make presentations, but are still welcome to attend the conference. Participants are encouraged to submit a complete article by August 20, 2011, in MS Word format to the email address: info@uscet.net. Selected outstanding papers will be recognized in a conference report.

We are looking forward to meeting you in Changchun, the "Long Spring" city in September 2011!

Institute of American Studies, Northeast Normal University
US-China Education Trust
Center for History of World Civilizations, Northeast Normal University
Association of American Historical Research in China
April 18, 2011

2011 American Studies Network (ASN) Annual Conference

US Soft Power and Social Equality

Reply Form

Name		Gender		Professional Title	
Institution					
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E-mail					
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Paper Title					
Note					